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SUPERSTITIONS FROM GEORGIA.

II.

IN the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. v. 1892, pp. 318-320, appeared an article on "Folk-Lore from Maine," by Gertrude De-crow, in which were enumerated various superstitions and traditions of the folk in that State. I find a great similarity between these and the lore current in the South, particularly among the lower whites and negroes. I append a list of sayings, beliefs, traditions, superstitions, or what you will, that find place in the lore of this people : —

To kill a ghost, it must be shot with a bullet made of a silver quarter-dollar. Silver nails or screws in a coffin will prevent the dead haunting the scenes of its existence in the flesh.

An infant, measured, will die before its growing time is over. My mother once started to measure her sleeping baby-boy, when the nurse, an old negress, sprang forward crying : "Dat chile ain't dead yet, ter be measured." Explanations ensued, and the measuring was deferred.

No person who touches a dead body will be haunted by its spirit.

To thank a person for combing your hair will bring bad luck.

Dog howls — the sign of death.

To cut a baby's finger-nails deform it ; if the baby is a month old such action will cause the child to have fits.

To allow a child to look into a mirror before it is a month old will cause it trouble in teething.

Tickling a baby causes stuttering.

Cut a dog's "dew-claws," and it will not die from poisonous snake-bite.

A child will have a nature and disposition similar to that of the person who first takes it out of doors.

To see the new moon through clouds or treetops means trouble ; if the disk is clear, good luck ; if seen over the right shoulder, joy ; if over the left, anger and disappointment.

To dream of a live snake signifies enemies at large ; if a dead snake, enemies dead or powerless.

To dream of unbroken eggs signifies trouble to come ; if the eggs are broken, your trouble is past.

To throw out of a window hair combings is bad luck.

To hear a screech-owl is a sign of bad luck. To prevent their cry, turn the pockets, and set the shoes soles upward.

Plant all seeds, make soap, and kill meat, on the increase of the moon. If done on the decrease, the seeds will not grow, the soap will not lather, and the meat will shrink.

Never begin a task or journey on Friday.

If one lets fall the dish-cloth, some one is coming.

Spill the salt is a sign of anger ; itching palms," of money.

Stir jellies, butter, sauce, etc., to the right ; also soap. Otherwise it will not "make."

If you kill frogs, your cows will "go dry."

To cut off a pup's tail, causes him to grow "smart."

If you kill "granddaddies" the cows will die.

If a person comes into your presence while you are talking about him, and puts his hands upon you anyhow or anywhere, you will die.

These and many others form a long list that still holds good among the superstitiously inclined.

Mr. Joel Chandler Harris has immortalized himself by working up into literary shape the current fables and stories. Most of them are fables told me by my grandfather's sometime slaves when I was a child. Many of these negroes had been brought over in 1858 from the Galla district in the Congo country of Africa, and as soon as they could make themselves understood by a gibberish that was a mixture of our language and theirs, their stories, fables, traditions, etc., began to be circulated among the other darkies.

It is a question with many how the folk-lore of Africa, Asia, India, and Ceylon ever became current in the United States. It is a problem easily disposed of. Legends of those foreign countries were interchanged by emigrants and refugees. They were brought to the United States by the slaves themselves, as has just been demonstrated, perhaps spreading even to the Indians in the same way.

A cargo from Congo was brought to Liberty County, Georgia, only a few years before the abolition of slavery, and their descendants of the second generation are finer specimens of physical manhood, though inferior intellectually to the descendants of six generations of slaves.

One cargo of these negroes, numbering six hundred, were purchased by one man, and placed upon Ossaba Island off the Georgia coast to cultivate Sea Island cotton. There they lived almost in their native style, practising many of their native superstitious customs, domesticated slaves watching the performance and naturally imbibing many ideas and habits demonstrated by the savages.

So the question as to how the traditions of other countries ever found a footing in this need no longer worry and mystify the anthropologists. They came over on the slave ships, with the very first emigration, and have remained with us ever since.

But American folk-lore is as composite as the people itself, coming from the identical number of sources.

*Ruby Andrews Moore.*